

Social Assessment

Project Title: Promoting Community Participation in the Yunnan Snub-Nosed Monkey Conservation by Strengthening Community Conservation Areas Management Within the Monkey Corridor

Organization: The Nature Conservancy

Application Code: 57705

Based on CEPF feedbacks on the submitted LoI, the proposed project does work in the areas where Indigenous Peoples live in and the proposed activities might change their behaviors and schemes refer to natural resources management and utilization. As required, together with the local partners, The Nature Conservancy prepares this Social Assessment document to demonstrate the project will comply with CEPF's Safeguard Policy on Indigenous Peoples.

1. Indigenous Peoples

The proposed project aims to strengthen the on-the-ground management practices of the pilot CCAs established in the first phase investment in Bamei village, Deqin County (to ensure habitat protection of Bamei sub-population and enhance the connectivity of populations between Tibet and Yunnan), Tuoluoding village, Weixi County (to protect the expanded habitat of Xiangguqing sub-population, the largest monkey sub-population within the range), and Liju village within Laojun Mt., Yulong County (to protect the key habitat of Jinsichang sub-population). All the project areas belong to the natural and cultural heritage of northwest Yunnan's "Three Parallel Rivers", which possesses a breathtaking array of unique natural and cultural forms. Subsequently, a majority of these communities are home to indigenous peoples and inhabitants predominantly belong to the Naxi, Lisu and Tibetan ethnic minority groups.

Bamei village locates in the northern corner of northwest Yunnan, bordered on Mangkang county in southeast Tibet. Bamei is the origin of one of the type

specimens of Yunnan snub-nosed monkey and covers a great patch of primary forest where a monkey group with the estimated number of 80 individuals (2005 population survey) lives in. Based on the socioeconomic data published by the government in 2006, the Bamei administrative village holds 12 villager groups and 237 households, with 60% of the community members belong to Naxi ethnic group and other 40% belong to Tibetan. A feasibility study of establishing Community Conservation Area in Bamei in 2009 found that, among the 116km² monkey habitat within Bamei village, about 1/3 (about 40km²) belongs to the collective forests of Jiaka and Xilu villager groups, while the rest is national forest. There live 20 households, 90 people in Xilu, while 27 households, 133 people in Jiaka, with all belonging to Naxi ethnic group. Nearly all of the local communities believe in the Tibetan Buddhism and remain the tradition of preserving sacred lands. Within the sacred lands, both villages own traditional regulations on natural resource management, mainly on restriction of fuel-wood and timber collection. However, along with the gradual loss of traditional culture and expanded economic development needs, the traditional rules on natural resource management did not work well enough and the surrounding monkey habitat began to suffer from unsustainable use of the forest. Now, the local communities rely heavily on the surrounding natural resources, with approximately half of the household income coming from non-timber forest products (NTFP) collection, such as traditional Chinese medicine herbs and mushrooms.

Tuoluoding is a natural villager group belongs to Tacheng Administrative Village, Tacheng Township, Weixi County, Diqing Tibetan Prefecture. The village is on the periphery of Baima Snow Mountain National Nature Reserve, with only 100m from the boundary of the nature reserve. The about 130ha of community's collective forest is bordered on the natural forest of the nature reserve, and preliminarily intact alpine conifer forest with diverse wildlife living within, such as musk deer, goral, macaques and several pheasants. The largest Yunnan snub-nosed monkey population – Xiangguqing sub-population with more than 400 individuals -- always forages in the collective forest of Tuoluoding village in spring, autumn and winter.

There are 35 households with 155 people living in this community (85 are male and 70 are female), all belonging to Lisu ethnic minority. They are also highly dependent on the surrounding natural resources, with more than 80% of income coming from NTFP collection. Great demands on the fuel-wood and unsustainable NTFP collection from this community also substantially threaten the nearby monkey habitat.

Liju village locates in the Shitou Township, within the interior of Laojun Mountain, Yulong County of Lijiang City. The village is the water source area of Chongjiang River, the important tributary flowing into the Upper Yangtze River, and also on the periphery of the key habitat of Jinsichang sub-population of Yunnan snub-nosed monkey, which represents a unique gene pool of the endangered species. The Liju village holds 13 natural villager groups and 338 households (1344 people) belonging to Lisu, Pumi, Yi and other ethnic minority groups, with all living on the alpine mountains above 2400m in elevation. Due to the limitation of high elevation and extreme weather condition, the local villagers can hardly self-sufficient from the agriculture and therefore rely heavily on the natural resource utilization. Besides NTFP collection and fuel-wood collection, the Lisu people here also have the hunting tradition and normally hunt on the wildlife species including the monkeys in the nearby collective and national forest.

2. Potential Impacts and Mitigation Strategies

The proposed project activities might cause potential challenges for communities, particularly relating to reduced access to natural resources within the established Community Conservation Areas. The implementing agencies will seek to establish a process to identify impacts and to develop mitigation strategies.

As stated above, fuel-wood collection, NTFP collection and hunting on wildlife are the main patterns for the local communities within project areas to utilize the surrounding natural resource. In the past, some communities like Bamei, had the traditional rules on natural resource management that agreed and complied with by all community members. Meanwhile, the relatively low population density in the

past made it sustainable that the locals can rely on NTPF collection and wildlife hunting. However, along with the rapid population increase and demands for economic development, the communities gradually lost their traditional belief and lack management for collectively owned resources, which has led to significant degradation of natural resources. For instance, collecting mushrooms in summer is a major income for farmers, and individuals tend to collect as much as they can at once. Without rules of collection agreed among communities, it is very easy that these mushrooms become over-exploited and will finally harm the communities' livelihood in the long run.

The proposed project will help the local communities create or reinforce the self-governing community bodies, and help build their capacity in developing community development projects, formulating common rules for managing and utilizing collective natural resources, and determining benefit distribution schemes for community ventures such as wild mushroom harvesting and bee-keeping. One possible impact is that the altered management regime will limit the access to natural resources, which might result in eliminated illegal hunting, reduced fuel-wood collection or limited mushroom harvesting. In addition to foregone income and reduced livelihood opportunities, such restrictions may be regarded as limiting the autonomy over resource use decisions that communities presently enjoy. However, based on the first phase experiences, majority of the affected community members regarded this as a great opportunity to enhance the management of resources and improving livelihoods, particularly by preventing commercial scale resource extraction. And all the rules regulating resource uses will be developed and agreed by the community members themselves before implementing, and will benefit the communities by sustainably using their resources in the long run.

As to mitigation of the potential challenges to the Indigenous Peoples, the project will seek every means to balance the livelihood needs and biodiversity protection in the pilot CCAs without negatively impacting the life of the local peoples. This may be achieved by:

- providing opportunities for people previously involved in illegal hunting and

logging activities to be actively involved in conservation activities that might generate incomes;

- reducing the need for unsustainable fuel-wood collection by providing alternative energy techniques and facilities;
- mitigating dependence on natural resources by community-based alternative livelihood projects such as bee-keeping, local chicken farming etc.;
- supporting communities to participate in the establishment of regulations for the use of forestry resources, and seeking to understand and recognize customary use and access regimes in the pilot CCAs;
- all the community-related work will employ a participatory approach designed to increase community cohesion and ability to advocate on issue of concern;

3. Community Participation and Consultation

During the first phase of CEPF investment in the pilot CCAs, a participatory investigation and rapid assessment for each site has already been completed by the implementing agency and partners to generate the initial information about relevant community issues, attitudes toward and expectations of the CCA establishment. Specifically in Tuoluoding CCA, a participatory evaluation was also conducted to acquire the local communities' attitude on the implemented project activities during the past year. All the information generated indicated that the local communities were willing to participate in such resource management practices and alternative livelihoods projects. In general these Indigenous communities welcomed the opportunity to be more actively involved in the management of natural resources.

Before preparing the proposed project plan, all the proposed activities have been fully consulted with the affected community representatives by the local NGO partners and developed based on their comments. These initial consultations with communities provide a solid basis for the implementing agencies to undertake further and more detailed social assessment and monitoring. The first step after the

project initiation will be a well-designed community participatory baseline survey to gather the most precise information on the current status and potential problems of CCA management. Opportunities to seek the views of different groups within communities – women, men, older and younger people, poorer and less poor people – should be sought, particularly during participatory mapping processes, and in consultations to assess the impact of restricted access to CCAs. Information on possible adverse impacts and mitigation measures will also be collected from the community members. Throughout the project implementation process, open discussion with communities about the challenges and possible adverse impacts will be encouraged by the established public management mechanism and the regular on-site monitoring.

To facilitate community participation, all the proposed activities will build on the basis of establishing a capable management body which can organize majority of the community members and represent their opinions.

4. Monitoring Plan

As above-mentioned, the first step after the project initiation will be a well-designed community baseline survey to gather the most precise information on the current status and potential problems of CCA management. The survey will be conducted adopting a set of appropriate measures with both ecological and socio-economic elements. The ecological component mainly includes the indicators on habitat management, biodiversity, monkey population status and threat conditions, while the socio-economic component will address the benefits to the local people from a conservation initiative, using 9 focus areas in three dimensions, namely Opportunities (livelihoods, wealth indicators, access to credits, education), Empowerment (governance mechanism, community participation, role of women) and Security (health, conflict levels).

The baseline survey will collect the initial status of the community, identify the affected people and prepare a more detailed mitigation plan. Throughout the project implementation, regular monitoring using the designed set of measures will be

conducted by the independent neutral party to monitor the potential adverse impacts and ensure the adequate mitigation measures to be conducted.

5. Grievance Mechanism

Free, Prior and Informed Consent with the local communities is the guiding principle of the project implementation. TNC and the sub-grantees will jointly conduct baseline surveys in the villages that will be affected by the project using participatory methodology. Meetings will typically be held with the full or majority of the community to discuss and formulate the management regulations and benefit-distribution mechanisms on their own. All the consultations and discussions will be held in their local languages if necessary (Tibetan in Bamei, Lisu language in Tuoluoding & Liju), to ensure that all the indigenous people can participate in the process. The consent of the community on the management regulations and benefit-distribution mechanisms will be obtained before any designations and activities are implemented. Minutes of the meetings will be kept and copies of the minutes will be filed and distributed. Any actions that require the consent of the community will be clearly described in the minutes and consent will be recorded in the minutes.

During the project implementation, several levels of grievance mechanism will be designed. Within the community, all the management regulations and benefit distribution mechanism should be formulated and agreed by the majority of community members through open meetings and public voting. An effective public monitoring and reporting mechanism needs to be developed by the community members. On the second level, the local NGO partners who are responsible of implementing the sub-grants and the local project coordinator will conduct regular on-site monitoring and to inquire the community members about the project implementation and if there are any adverse impacts or grievance. On the third level, the independent evaluation experts and the project officer will evaluate the project impacts and find opportunities to directly communicate with the community members. All available contact information for grievance will be informed to the local communities.